

## Terms of Reference JLI Working Group on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

### **Background:**

One of JLI's goals is to strengthen excellence in research and learning as it relates to religion and development and humanitarian response. A key requirement for accelerating progress in the realm is to consolidate learning on monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) and to help in the development of frameworks and indicators. Since 2012 JLI has been focused on this topic, as part of its ongoing evidence gathering and communications. JLI co-hosted with International Care Ministries and the Poverty Action Lab a conference at Yale University on Faith-based Measurement and Metrics. JLI coordinated, for the Evidence Working Group of the World Bank's Moral Imperative, the development of a Guide to Excellence in Evidence (<https://guide.jliflc.com/resources/>) and maintains a listing of relevant resources on its Measurement and Metrics page (<https://jliflc.com/faith-based-measurement-metrics/>).

We propose a Working Group (WG) to focus on MEAL, inspired in part by an opportunity to consider faith-based M&E for the UNICEF Faith and Positive Change for Children Initiative and also from recent requests from JLI members to continue to build more information on faith and M&E.

From JLI research over the last 6 years coupled with experience from JLI members and partners, it has become clear that there is a need to address divides in current M&E with local faith partners. In some cases, M&E is not at all or only partially achieved because of diverging priorities between international and local partners and different ideas about what is relevant for largely-secular international M&E frameworks and the learning needs of local faith actors. There is a need for further learning exchanges on how to work with local faith actors on M&E so that the M&E in partnerships are fruitful and meaningful for all, countering current negative perceptions from faith actors that M&E is an unnecessary burden and from development partners that faith actors do not have the capacity or willingness to be part of M&E. Key questions remain about how to create M&E approaches that are relevant, appropriate and meaningful for local faith actors, while also meeting international, often donor-based, M&E requirements.

For the purposes of this TOR, we define local faith actors as national and local faith-based NGOs, committees, councils, faith communities, religious leaders, and other such groupings that have, or are interested in having, partnerships with international humanitarian and development actors (secular or faith-based) to implement projects that require an M&E component.

Members of the MEAL WG have decades of experience working on M&E with and for local faith actors. Collectively, the experience of the WG demonstrates the opportunities and potential pitfalls of working through partnerships with local faith actors on M&E.

**Goal:** The Working Group will provide structure and support for learning exchange on MEAL with and for local faith actors. Specifically, the aim of the group will be to consider MEAL between international

actors and local faith actors, taking into account existing issues, and aiming to compile good practice examples to be of use to a broad humanitarian and development audience.

### **Objectives:**

1. Exchange learning from a range of organizations about the ways in which faith is brought into MEAL
2. Identify practical steps to working on MEAL in meaningful, co-creative, and equitable ways with local faith actors
3. Consolidate learning into a final *Compendium of Good Practices on Conducting MEAL in Partnerships with International Actors and Local Faith Actors*
  - a. Invite case study submissions
  - b. Consult with local and national faith actors
  - c. Share case study learning in the WG calls
  - d. Compile final compendium
  - e. Consider options to translate compendium into a set of guidelines

**Time-frame:** July 2019-December 2020

### **Considerations:**

- Take into account perspective from multiple faiths, while noting the dominance of Christian FBOs in this space so far, the WG is making an active effort to include more faith backgrounds among the group's participants.
- Acknowledge already existing groups and efforts considering spiritual metrics and other aligned topic areas and aiming to avoid duplication with these groups
- Take into account existing M&E frames for social and behavior change and other ways in which secular actors have sought to work with local faith actors on M&E
- Work in ways that are usable in a programmatic sense (rather than conducting a research project per se) and are genuinely relevant to local faith actors
- Consider mixed methods approaches, recognising that a) current religion and development research is dominated by qualitative approaches and b) that current development M&E is dominated by quantitative approaches. We do not aim to prioritise one over the other.
- Consider how M&E is connected to key programmatic processes including formative research, knowledge management and peer review publication
- Consider new and innovative M&E methods, e.g., development evaluation and others.

### **Leadership and Participation**

The working group will be led by Dr Olivia Wilkinson, JLI Director of Research with support from JLI's Program Manager and RAs as possible.

- [Dan Williams](#), HOPE International, co-chair
- [Michelle Garred](#), Peace and Evaluation Consultant, is advising on inclusion of new participants

- [Jennifer Eggert](#), HAD International, co-chair

#### Member Organizations:

- ADRA International
- American Friends Service Committee
- American Jewish World Service
- University of Cape Town
- Catholic Relief Services
- Christian Journal for Global Health
- Compassion Intl
- Eastern Mennonite
- Eido Research
- End Poverty
- Episcopal Relief & Development
- Food for the Hungry
- Georgia Southern
- HAD International/ Islamic Relief
- Hope International
- International Care Ministries
- IR USA
- KAICIID
- Living Water International
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Queen Margaret University
- Ripple
- Salvation Army
- Tearfund
- UNICEF
- WCC
- World Relief
- World Vision International

#### **Meetings and Process**

##### **1. First Meeting**

- Introductions
- Discussion of TOR and complementarity with existing groups
- Next steps

##### **2. Second Meeting – Zoom, two hours, Tuesday 10th September, 10 am-12 pm ET**

- Pre-meeting: share 1-2 documents/reports/briefings that summarise your organisation's current thinking on faith and M&E. Upload to shared google drive (link will be accessible to WG members).
- Decide updates on the TOR
- Storytelling approach:
  - Share one story that demonstrates what makes a faith-based approach to MEAL different to a non-faith-based approach
  - Share one story that demonstrates either a challenge or an opportunity of working with local faith partners in M&E

##### **3. Third Meeting - Zoom, 90 minutes, November 20**

- Discuss overall project and final TOR
- Discuss ideas from shared materials on google drive

- Invite one speaker to present on a case - learning exchange segment
  - Discuss next steps for the call for cases for good practices
4. **Fourth meeting - Zoom, 90 minutes, January 22**
- Review good practices call and discuss dissemination and any queries
  - Invite one speaker to present on a case - learning exchange segment
5. **Regular monthly meetings (February-May) - Zoom, one hour**
- Presentation from an invited speaker (both internal and external speakers to WG) to present their good practice to the group
  - JLI will consolidate the good practices and write them up in a draft form by JUNE 2020
6. **Check-in meeting, June**
- Review TOR and update as needed
  - Review draft good practices compendium
  - Plan for next steps and end of year, including finalising the compendium, considering development of guidelines from the compendium, and then testing the guidelines
7. **JLI MEAL WG Good Practices** - finalised by end of 2020